

# PROGRAMME OF ORGANIZATION

## OF THE

# SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.

[PRESENTED IN THE FIRST ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SECRETARY, AND ADOPTED  
BY THE BOARD OF REGENTS, DECEMBER 13, 1847.]

---

### INTRODUCTION.

*General considerations which should serve as a guide in adopting a Plan of Organization.*

---

1. WILL OF SMITHSON. The property is bequeathed to the United States of America, "to found at Washington, under the name of the SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men."

2. The bequest is for the benefit of mankind. The Government of the United States is merely a trustee to carry out the design of the testator.

3. The Institution is not a national establishment, as is frequently supposed, but the establishment of an individual, and is to bear and perpetuate his name.

4. The objects of the Institution are, 1st, to Increase, and 2d, to Diffuse knowledge among men.

5. These two objects should not be confounded with one another. The first is to enlarge the existing stock of knowledge by the addition of new truths; and the second, to disseminate knowledge, thus increased, among men.

6. The will makes no restriction in favor of any particular kind of knowledge; hence all branches are entitled to a share of attention.

7. Knowledge can be increased by different methods of facilitating and promoting the discovery of new truths; and can be most extensively diffused among men by means of the press.

8. To effect the greatest amount of good, the organization should be such as to enable the Institution to produce results, in the way of increasing and diffusing knowledge, which cannot be produced either at all or so efficiently by the existing institutions in our country.

9. The organization should also be such as can be adopted provisionally, can be easily reduced to practice, receive modifications, or be abandoned, in whole or in part, without a sacrifice of the funds.

10. In order to compensate, in some measure, for the loss of time occasioned by the delay of eight years in establishing the Institution, a considerable portion of the interest which has accrued should be added to the principal.

11. In proportion to the wide field of knowledge to be cultivated, the funds are small. Economy should therefore be consulted in the construction of the building; and not only the first cost of the edifice should be considered, but also the continual expense of keeping it in repair, and of the support of the establishment necessarily connected with it. There should also be but few individuals permanently supported by the Institution.

12. The plan and dimensions of the building should be determined by the plan of the organization, and not the converse.

13. It should be recollected that mankind in general are to be benefited by the bequest, and that, therefore, all unnecessary expenditure on local objects would be a perversion of the trust.

14. Besides the foregoing considerations, deduced immediately from the will of Smithson, regard must be had to certain requirements of the act of Congress establishing the Institution. These are, a library, a museum, and a gallery of art, with a building on a liberal scale to contain them.

## SECTION I.

### *Plan of Organization of the Institution in accordance with the foregoing deductions from the Will of Smithson.*

TO INCREASE KNOWLEDGE. It is proposed—

1. To stimulate men of talent to make original researches, by offering suitable rewards for memoirs containing new truths; and,
2. To appropriate annually a portion of the income for particular researches, under the direction of suitable persons.

TO DIFFUSE KNOWLEDGE. It is proposed—

1. To publish a series of periodical reports on the progress of the different branches of knowledge; and,
2. To publish occasionally separate treatises on subjects of general interest.

### DETAILS OF THE PLAN TO INCREASE KNOWLEDGE.

#### *I. By stimulating researches.*

1. Facilities afforded for the production of original memoirs on all branches of knowledge.
2. The memoirs thus obtained to be published in a series of volumes, in a quarto form, and entitled *Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge*.
3. No memoir, on subjects of physical science, to be accepted for publication, which does not furnish a positive addition to human knowledge, resting on original research; and all unverified speculations to be rejected.
4. Each memoir presented to the Institution to be submitted for examination to a commission of persons of reputation for learning in the branch to which the memoir pertains; and to be accepted for publication only in case the report of this commission is favorable.
5. The commission to be chosen by the officers of the Institution, and the name of the author, as far as practicable, concealed, unless a favorable decision be made.
6. The volumes of the memoirs to be exchanged for Transactions of literary and scientific societies, and copies to be given to all the colleges, and principal libraries, in this country. One part of the remaining copies may be offered for sale; and the other carefully preserved, to form complete sets of the work, to supply the demand from new institutions.
7. An abstract, or popular account, of the contents of these memoirs to be given to the Public through the annual report of the Regents to Congress.

#### *II. By appropriating a part of the income, annually, to special objects of research, under the direction of suitable persons.*

1. The objects, and the amount appropriated, to be recommended by counsellors of the Institution.
2. Appropriations in different years to different objects; so that in course of time each branch of knowledge may receive a share.
3. The results obtained from these appropriations to be published, with the memoirs before mentioned, in the volumes of the *Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge*.
4. Examples of objects for which appropriations may be made:
  - (1.) System of extended meteorological observations for solving the problem of American storms.
  - (2.) Explorations in descriptive natural history, and geological, magnetical, and topographical surveys, to collect materials for the formation of a *Physical Atlas of the United States*.
  - (3.) Solution of experimental problems, such as a new determination of the weight of the earth, of the velocity of electricity, and of light; chemical analyses of soils and plants; collection and publication of scientific facts, accumulated in the offices of Government.
  - (4.) Institution of statistical inquiries with reference to physical, moral, and political subjects.
  - (5.) Historical researches, and accurate surveys of places celebrated in American history.
  - (6.) Ethnological researches, particularly with reference to the different races of men in North America; also, explorations, and accurate surveys, of the mounds and other remains of the ancient people of our country.

## DETAILS OF THE PLAN FOR DIFFUSING KNOWLEDGE.

I. *By the publication of a series of Reports, giving an account of the new discoveries in science, and of the changes made from year to year in all branches of knowledge not strictly professional.*

1. These reports will diffuse a kind of knowledge generally interesting, but which, at present, is inaccessible to the public. Some of the reports may be published annually, others at longer intervals, as the income of the Institution or the changes in the branches of knowledge may indicate.

2. The reports are to be prepared by collaborators, eminent in the different branches of knowledge.

3. Each collaborator to be furnished with the journals and publications, domestic and foreign, necessary to the compilation of his report; to be paid a certain sum for his labors, and to be named on the title-page of the report.

4. The reports to be published in separate parts, so that persons interested in a particular branch, can procure the parts relating to it without purchasing the whole.

5. These reports may be presented to Congress, for partial distribution, the remaining copies to be given to literary and scientific institutions, and sold to individuals for a moderate price.

*The following are some of the subjects which may be embraced in the reports :*

## I. PHYSICAL CLASS.

1. Physics, including astronomy, natural philosophy, chemistry, and meteorology.
2. Natural History, including botany, zoology, geology, &c.
3. Agriculture.
4. Application of science to arts.

## II. MORAL AND POLITICAL CLASS.

5. Ethnology, including particular history, comparative philology, antiquities, &c.
6. Statistics and political economy.
7. Mental and moral philosophy.
8. A survey of the political events of the world; penal reform, &c.

## III. LITERATURE AND THE FINE ARTS.

9. Modern literature.
10. The fine arts, and their application to the useful arts.
11. Bibliography.
12. Obituary notices of distinguished individuals.

II. *By the publication of separate treatises on subjects of general interest.*

1. These treatises may occasionally consist of valuable memoirs translated from foreign languages, or of articles prepared under the direction of the Institution, or procured by offering premiums for the best exposition of a given subject.

2. The treatises should, in all cases, be submitted to a commission of competent judges, previous to their publication.

3. As examples of these treatises, expositions may be obtained of the present state of the several branches of knowledge mentioned in the table of reports.



## SECTION II.

*Plan of Organization, in accordance with the terms of the resolutions of the Board of Regents providing for the two modes of increasing and diffusing knowledge.*

1. The act of Congress establishing the Institution contemplated the formation of a library and a museum; and the Board of Regents, including these objects in the plan of organization, resolved to divide the income\* into two equal parts.

2. One part to be appropriated to increase and diffuse knowledge by means of publications and researches, agreeably to the scheme before given. The other part to be appropriated to the formation of a library and a collection of objects of nature and of art.

3. These two plans are not incompatible with one another.

4. To carry out the plan before described, a library will be required, consisting, 1st, of a complete collection of the transactions and proceedings of all the learned societies in the world; 2d, of the more important current periodical publications, and other works necessary in preparing the periodical reports.

5. The Institution should make special collections, particularly of objects to illustrate and verify its own publications.

6. Also, a collection of instruments of research in all branches of experimental science.

7. With reference to the collection of books, other than those mentioned above, catalogues of all the different libraries in the United States should be procured, in order that the valuable books first purchased may be such as are not to be found in the United States.

8. Also, catalogues of memoirs, and of books in foreign libraries, and other materials, should be collected for rendering the Institution a centre of bibliographical knowledge, whence the student may be directed to any work which he may require.

9. It is believed that the collections in natural history will increase by donation as rapidly as the income of the Institution can make provision for their reception, and, therefore, it will seldom be necessary to purchase articles of this kind.

10. Attempts should be made to procure for the gallery of art casts of the most celebrated articles of ancient and modern sculpture.

11. The arts may be encouraged by providing a room, free of expense, for the exhibition of the objects of the Art-Union and other similar societies.

12. A small appropriation should annually be made for models of antiquities, such as those of the remains of ancient temples, &c.

13. For the present, or until the building is fully completed, besides the Secretary, no permanent assistant will be required, except one, to act as librarian.

14. The duty of the Secretary will be the general superintendence, with the advice of the Chancellor and other members of the establishment, of the literary and scientific operations of the Institution; to give to the Regents annually an account of all the transactions; of the memoirs which have been received for publication; of the researches which have been made; and to edit, with the assistance of the librarian, the publications of the Institution.

15. The duty of the Assistant Secretary, acting as librarian, will be, for the present, to assist in taking charge of the collections, to select and purchase, under the direction of the Secretary and a committee of the board, books and catalogues, and to procure the information before mentioned; to give information on plans of libraries, and to assist the Secretary in editing the publications of the Institution, and in the other duties of his office.

16. The Secretary and his assistants, during the session of Congress, will be required to illustrate new discoveries in science, and to exhibit new objects of art; distinguished individuals should also be invited to give lectures on subjects of general interest.

17. When the building is completed, and when, in accordance with the act of Congress, the charge of the National Museum is given to the Smithsonian Institution, other assistants will be required.

---

\* NOTE—The amount of the Smithsonian bequest received into the Treasury of the United States is.....\$515,169 00  
Interest on the same to July 1, 1846, (devoted to the erection of the building,)..... 242,129 00  
Annual income from the bequest. .... 30,910 14